

Having described the invention, the following is claimed:

1. An apparatus for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device in an inflated condition in the vehicle having an upper portion and a lower portion;

an inflator for providing inflation fluid for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device; and

a fabric deflector tube located in said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device for directing a flow of said inflation fluid from said inflator into said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device;

said fabric deflector tube having opposite first and second ends, the first end being completely closed, said deflector tube having a first outlet adjacent said closed end for directing a first amount of inflation fluid from said inflator to said upper portion of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device, said second end of said fabric deflector tube being completely open and defining a second outlet for

directing a second amount of inflation fluid, larger than said first amount of inflation fluid, from said inflator to said lower portion of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a steering wheel having a central hub, a rim and at least one spoke interconnecting the hub and the rim, said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device being located on said steering wheel.

3. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said upper portion of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device in said inflated condition covers an upper portion of said rim and said lower portion of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device in said inflated condition covers a lower portion of said rim.

4. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said fabric deflector tube is sandwiched between a mouth portion of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device and a retainer around said inflator

so that said fabric deflector tube is located inside said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device.

5. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first outlet comprises two separate outlet openings.

6. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said second outlet comprises one outlet opening larger in area than said first outlet.

7. The apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the area of said second outlet is approximately 3.6 times larger than a combined area of said first outlet.